HOUSE OF COMMONS
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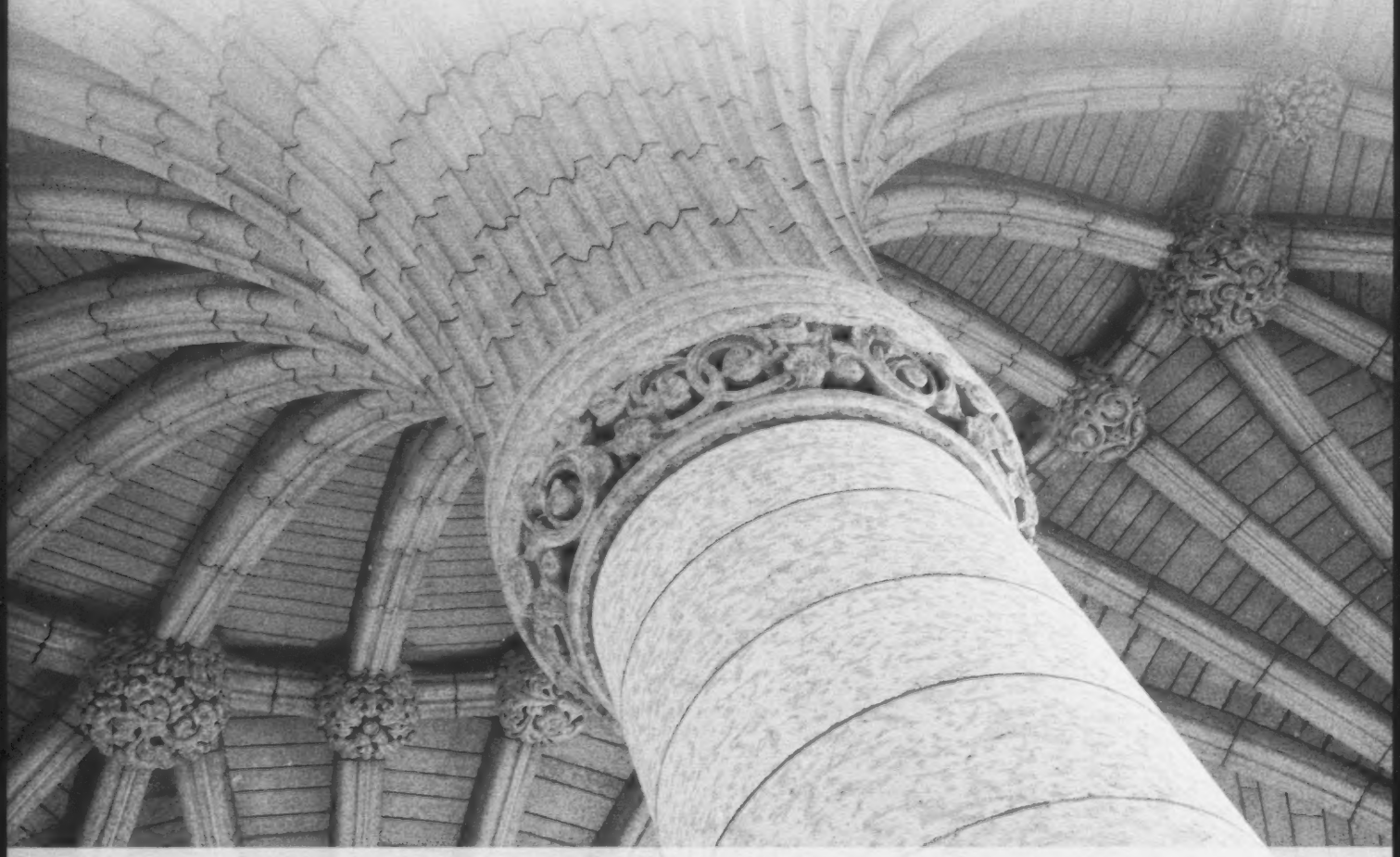
CANADA

INTERIM REPORT ON RUSSIA'S INTERFERENCE IN MOLDOVA

Report of the Standing Committee on National Defence

Stephen Fuhr, Chair



JUNE 2018
42nd PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

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Reports from committees presented to the House of Commons

Presenting a report to the House is the way a committee makes public its findings and recommendations on a particular topic. Substantive reports on a subject-matter study usually contain a synopsis of the testimony heard, the recommendations made by the committee, as well as the reasons for those recommendations.

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* Non-voting member, pursuant to Standing Order 104(5).

THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL DEFENCE

has the honour to present its

ELEVENTH REPORT

Pursuant to its mandate under Standing Order 108(2), the Committee has studied Moldova's geopolitical and military interests in the context of Russian hostility and aggression and has agreed to report the following:

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HOUSE OF COMMONS
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INTERIM REPORT ON RUSSIA'S INTERFERENCE IN MOLDOVA

On 14 June 2018, Ms. Ala Beleavschi, the Republic of Moldova's Ambassador to Canada, appeared before the House of Commons Standing Committee on National Defence (the Committee) to discuss the security, political and economic situation in Moldova and issues relating to Russian aggression in the region.

Like Georgia and Ukraine, Moldova has been increasingly concerned about Russia's recent resurgence as an aggressive and revisionist military power. Russia's conflict in Georgia (2008), its illegal occupation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia (2008), its illegal annexation of Crimea (2014) and its participation in the conflict in eastern Ukraine (since 2014) have raised concerns about Russia's intentions in the region. Moldova is no stranger to threats from Russia. For almost three decades, the country has had to cope with a pro-Russian separatist regime in the eastern Moldovan region of Transnistria along the border with Ukraine, which Russia has supported financially, politically and militarily.[1] Of particular concern to Moldova is the continued presence of more than 1,400 Russian military personnel in Transnistria despite Russia's repeated commitments to withdraw those troops from the region. Moldovans are increasingly apprehensive that Russia might escalate the ongoing conflict in eastern Ukraine by opening up a second front in western Ukraine from Transnistria.

Security concerns have prompted Moldova to increase its investments in its national defence and security. In particular, Ambassador Beleavschi told the Committee that Moldova remains highly vulnerable to cyber-attacks and hybrid warfare threats to its energy, information, other critical infrastructure, and language and culture, which highlights the need to enhance the country's defence capabilities. According to

1 Transnistria is a self-proclaimed state that remains internationally recognized as part of Moldova. It is located along the east bank of the Dniester River, which borders the rest of Moldova to the west and Ukraine to the east. The territory of Transnistria was historically part of Ukraine, but gained autonomy in 1924 with the proclamation of the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR). In 1940, the Soviet Union invaded the Romanian territory of Bessarabia and incorporated it into the Moldavian ASSR, resulting in the creation of the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR). After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Moldavian SSR declared its independence and became known as the Republic of Moldova. Tensions developed between Moldova and the territory of Transnistria, which opposed separation from the Soviet Union. These tensions escalated in a short war between Moldova and Transnistria in 1992, resulting in a ceasefire agreement that remains in place. Today, Transnistria continues to be supported by Russia, which maintains a contingent of about 1,400 troops in Transnistria on the pretext of having to safeguard approximately 20,000 tons of Russian ammunition

Ambassador Beleavschi, Moldova's small army, comprising approximately 6,500 active-duty military personnel, remains under-trained and under-equipped. However, she also noted that Moldova's government recently adopted a national defence strategy that seeks to modernize and professionalize its military through enhanced training and the procurement of new equipment for the purpose of participating more efficiently in international peace operations.

Ambassador Beleavschi stated that, although Moldova remains a neutral country, it maintains strong relations and co-operation with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). As a case in point, she referred to the Moldovan army's regular participation – alongside forces from Georgia and Ukraine – in joint NATO training exercises in the region, and to the Moldovan government's recent decision to establish a NATO liaison office in Moldova. Moldova wants not only to strengthen its relations with NATO, but also to enhance its cooperation with Europe. Like Georgia and Ukraine, Moldova aspires to join the European Union, and is implementing domestic reforms of its government, judicial and economic systems. The country has also shifted its trade to Europe in recent years. For example, according to Ambassador Beleavschi, while Moldova has traditionally exported to the east, today more than 67% of the country's exports are to the European Union.

Ambassador Beleavschi thanked Canada for its continued solidarity with, and support to, Moldova. In particular, she recognized Canada's recent decision to co-sponsor a United Nations' General Assembly resolution on the complete and unconditional withdrawal of foreign troops from the Moldovan territory of Transnistria. She also expressed gratitude to Canada for its participation in the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Mission to Moldova. That said, she encouraged Canada to do more to help Moldova, and suggested that Canada could adopt a common regional approach when dealing with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine; in her view, the three countries are facing the same problems and the same threats from Russia. She pointed out that Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine have just established an inter-parliamentary assembly with the goal of presenting a common front to withstand security threats in their region more efficiently and effectively. She also noted that Moldova is very interested in professionalizing and modernizing its army, and would like Canada to provide training and equipment, just as it is doing for Ukraine.

Moreover, with parliamentary elections in Moldova in November 2018, Ambassador Beleavschi asked Canada to support democratic, free and transparent elections in Moldova, and asked Canada's Parliament to support the Moldovan government's efforts to reform its country and its integration into the European Union.

APPENDIX A
LIST OF WITNESSES

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Embassy of the Republic of Moldova	2018/06/14	103
H.E. Ala Beleavschi, Ambassador of the Republic of Moldova to Canada		

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

A copy of the relevant *Minutes of Proceedings* (Meetings Nos 103 and 104) is tabled.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen Fuhr
Chair